

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 24, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WILSON made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Bill S. 211.]

*The Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia, to whom was referred the memorial of Henry O' Rielly, John J. Speed, and Tal. P. Shaffner, proposing to establish telegraphic communication between the army of Utah and the War Department, by erecting a line from the westerly terminus of the Missouri river line to Utah, have had the same under consideration, and report :*

That the memorialists are well known throughout the United States as practical telegraphers, they having erected or devised many lines of telegraph both in this country and Europe ; and your committee, therefore, have in their ability full confidence that if the authority of the government is given to them they will perform all they promise.

Your committee fully concur in the statement of the memorialists in their memorial, that—

“ The vast importance of telegraphic facilities for communication between the federal government and the civil and military authorities stationed in the interior Territories, *at any time*, is too obvious to require comment ; but in connexion with *military movements of warlike character*, we may quote the remark, often repeated by Gov. Marcy, that if telegraphic facilities had existed *southwardly* at the commencement of the Mexican war, the government might have prevented much loss of life and saved half a million of dollars by a *single telegraphic despatch*. Appearances already indicate that similar remark is more or less applicable to the Mormon difficulties. A single fact speaks volumes on this subject ; and that fact is, that our intelligence from the *extremities of Europe* is now *four weeks later* than from the American army on the borders of Nebraska and Utah, *near the centre of our own country*.”

The Secretary of War, in his annual report at the commencement of the present session, while recommending the immediate opening of two routes between the Atlantic States and Pacific coast, besides the rail route from El Paso to the Colorado, says :

“ A line of stockade posts upon two of these routes would not require

a very large force to maintain them, and, if placed at proper distances apart, would furnish certain means of a safe and rapid transportation of the mails and perfect protection to a telegraphic line from one ocean to the other, which latter object would, in itself, be worth far more to the country than the cost of the posts, and the expense of maintaining them."

Secretary Floyd, in reply to a letter addressed to him by your committee, has replied, in a letter dated March 16, 1858, very strongly recommending to the patronage of government the enterprise of the petitioners. The Secretary's letter is hereunto appended, and makes a part of this report.

These opinions of the late Secretary Marcy and the present Secretary of War, Floyd, are entitled to, and have, great weight on the minds of your committee. Indeed, so connected with the operations of war has the telegraph become, that it must be regarded as almost as indispensable to the successful operations of an army as the munitions of war themselves. There can hardly be a doubt that all the expenses of the various telegraph lines to the Crimea, during the war there, were paid tenfold by the facilities they gave for communication between the armies there and their several home governments. Indeed, the doubt has been expressed whether, without the aid of the telegraph, that war could have been successfully carried on by Great Britain and France.

A far grander result may be hoped for and expected from the establishment of the line contemplated by the memorialists in their proposition to Congress; for, although it be initiated as a military measure, it cannot but be evident to all, that, when the necessity for thus using it shall cease, it will remain a portion of that great bond of domestic intercourse, which *must* eventually enable the people on the Atlantic coast to hold hourly converse with their fellow-citizens on the Pacific! Although, *in itself*, but a frail wire, it will become the great chain of union to bind the wide extremities of our federal Union to each other.

The memorialists propose, should their prayer be granted, to connect Washington with the army of Utah *in one hundred days* from the time the ground is broken.

Regarding this as an enterprise of momentous importance and worthy of the patronage of this government, and believing that the money appropriated to carry it into effect will be well and judiciously expended, we report a bill for carrying out the project of the memorialists, and ask its early consideration.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, March 16, 1858.*

SIR: In answer to yours of the 10th instant, transmitting, for the opinion of this department, as to the necessity and propriety of making an appropriation for the completion of the telegraphic lines to Fort Laramie and Salt Lake, as suggested in the memorial of H. O'Rielly and others, I have the honor to state that, the advantage which the government would derive from a line of telegraphic communication, in successful operation to Fort Laramie, and beyond that point, cannot well be over-estimated. Such a line can be laid down at a comparatively small cost, with great expedition, and in such a manner as to secure it, in a great measure, against the danger of any interruption from Indians along the route; and, if once constructed and established, it could, at a moderate cost, be kept up.

Desirable as this enterprise would be at all times, as a means of transmitting intelligence, it rises, under the present state of things, to an importance that can scarcely be over-estimated. I cannot express too strongly my high estimation of its great value to the public service, and recommend it earnestly to the favorable consideration of your honorable committee.

The papers enclosed by you are herewith returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,  
*Secretary of War.*

Hon. R. W. JOHNSON,  
*Chairman pro tem. Committee on Military Affairs, Senate.*

